

U.S. Bureau of agricultural economics.

Division of farm population and rural welfare

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To: William Peterson, Director, Utah State Extension Service,
Logan, Utah

From: Olen E. Leonard, Division of Farm Population and Rural Welfare,
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Subject: Study of Neighborhood Leadership System in Emery and Utah
Counties, Utah - Division of Farm Population and Rural Welfare,
Bureau of Agricultural Economics, and Utah State Extension Service
cooperating.

GENERAL STATEMENT

This study was initiated and carried out cooperatively between the Division of Farm Population and Rural Welfare, Bureau of Agricultural Economics, and the Extension Service of Utah State. Thanks are due to Director Peterson and members of his State staff who furnished a great deal of background material on the two counties. Mr. Merrill Cooke, County Agent for Emery County, and Mr. S. R. Boswell, County Agent for Utah County, contributed generously of their time to the study. The conclusions and recommendations of the study are based on information furnished by Mr. Cooke and Mr. Boswell, County Agents of Emery and Utah Counties, respectively, from personal observations and participation in the organizing process, and from numerous conversations with neighborhood leaders and others in the two counties visited. The period of study was from October 5 - 23, inclusive.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to learn as much as possible in a short period of time of the organization and functioning of the new neighborhood leadership system in the two counties visited and to pass this information on to the Director in order that he might use it, as he best sees fit, for the benefit of other counties of the State struggling with the same problem. Although it is recognized that problems of organization will vary as between different counties, it is hoped that some of the generalizations coming out of the study will be applicable to the State as a whole.

COUNTIES SELECTED FOR STUDY

The counties of Emery and Utah were selected for study. There were multiple reasons for selecting these two counties but, primarily, they were selected because they represent extreme cases in the State as a whole. Emery County is purely agricultural, a county of small villages and small land holdings. Utah County, on the other hand, has several important industries, grows a wide variety of important crops, and has seven towns with populations of over 2,500. As an additional difference, Emery County has only begun the neighborhood leadership organization while Utah County has been one of the first in the State to get under way. Thus, it was generally decided that the State, as a whole, would profit most by a study of these two rather extreme situations.

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THE SITUATION IN EMERY COUNTY

Emery County is entirely rural. There are only eight incorporated villages in the county, none of them having as much as 1,000 population. The remainder of the population live in still smaller villages along the western side of the county.

Agriculture is the dominant occupation in the county. Hay and small grain are the principal crops grown. This farming is supplemented to a significant extent by cattle and sheep raising. The 1943 County Planning report lists 14,000 beef cattle in the county and about 26,000 or 27,000 sheep. This is in addition to the dairy cattle which number approximately 2,500.

According to the County Agent of Emery County, an extremely busy crop season, plus a rather unfavorable attitude on the part of local farmers, have precluded any possibility of getting the neighborhood leadership system under way at an early date. At the present time, however, the organization is moving ahead at a rapid pace and will likely be completed by December 1 of this year.

Mr. Cooke, County Agent of Emery County, is making extensive use of the existing County Planning Committee machinery in setting up this organization. Members of these committees are in a position to afford a great deal of aid and advice in selecting key people over the county.

In most of the neighborhood groups in this county, both a man and a woman leader have been selected for each group. The size of the groups is limited, usually from four to ten families per set of leaders. These groups correspond to the Womens' Relief Society Districts. Such districts are usually well selected and reduce to a minimum the distance a leader has to travel to contact each family in the district. These groups are fairly well defined in the minds of the people, especially for the women in the districts.

The need for using some definite criteria for delimiting small, functional groups arises as the result of practically all farm families in the county living in villages. These villages are, in reality, large neighborhoods of a size that make it necessary to distribute the territory among a number of leaders. This division has been done by the Womens' Relief Society for the purpose of carrying on their own group work.

The procedure Mr. Cooke has been using in organizing his county is generally as follows: First, a meeting is held in the village to be organized of several prominent, and perhaps formal, leaders. These leaders obtain a list of the Womens' Relief Society families, look over the list of names in each district and choose a man and woman leader for the district. This job can be done for an entire village in a relatively short period of time. After these leaders have been selected, each is sent a letter from the County Agent's office, informing them of their appointment and of the date a meeting of the neighborhood leaders, for the particular village, will be held. At this meeting, the purpose and proposed function of the neighborhood leadership system is carefully explained and an opportunity given for the discussion of any pertinent questions or problems.

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These meetings of the neighborhood leaders seem to be extremely worthwhile. Each leader is given an opportunity to ask any question on which he is not clear. These discussions often transform a recalcitrant leader into an enthusiastic worker. This point was excellently demonstrated at a meeting of the neighborhood leaders in the Lawrence Community. During the early stages of the meeting several of the leaders were reluctant to accept their appointments as neighborhood leaders. One of the leaders commented that "You have picked the busiest people in Lawrence and I don't think that we will have time to serve." After the nature of the work was explained, and later discussed, and the point established that not a great deal of time would likely be necessary to carry out assignments, all left the meeting with expressed willingness to go ahead.

The attitude of the Emery County Farmers, as a whole, seemed to be very good toward the new organization of neighborhood leaders. Many of them stated that they were cognizant of the need for "an all out effort" in the present crisis and were willing to do their part. All were convinced of the need for a more thorough understanding of important National, as well as State and local, problems and were hopeful that this new machinery would provide needy and pertinent information on such problems.

THE SITUATION IN UTAH COUNTY

Utah County is generally recognized as the heart of the State's agriculture. The 1940 Census of Agriculture reports over 3,000 farms in the county growing a variety of crops ranging from fruit and truck crops to hay, sugar beets and corn.

Most of the farms in the county are of family size. There are relatively few large, commercial units. Most of the farms are owner-operated. The proportion of all farms in the county operated by tenants was less than 13 percent in 1940. This is one of the lowest percentages of tenancy of any county in the Nation.

The population of the county, as reported by the 1940 Population Census, was 57,362. Although all but 17,777 of these people were reported by the Census as urban, many of these town dwellers were farmers since the predominant pattern for Utah is for the farmers to live in villages or towns.

Since the 1940 U. S. Census enumeration was made, Utah County has witnessed a flood of migrants coming into the county. Present war production has made it necessary to enlarge the existing steel mill in the county and another is currently being built that is, at present, employing approximately 8,000 workers. This sudden expansion in local industry has obviously brought about an acute state of congestion in living. The new workers have crowded into the local residential areas or else are living in temporary trailer camps.

With such rapidly occurring changes in progress, the neighborhood leadership organization in the county has encountered a number of complicating and complex problems. Although the organization is quite far along in the more isolated villages, it has necessarily progressed slowly in the highly congested areas of the county.

The procedure for organizing Utah County has been quite similar to that followed in Emery County. Mr. Boswell, the County Agent, has apparently had a very active County Planning Committee that is taking considerable interest in the neighborhood leadership organization. The Executive Committee of the County Planning Board is lending active support. The approval of the members of this committee has evidently been of considerable worth in popularizing the new organization throughout the county.

In villages where members of the County Planning Committee live, these members have been called together, with the other leaders in the village, as an initial step. At these meetings, neighborhood leaders are selected according to spatial location and prior evidence of leadership in the village. Families are then assigned to these leaders according to place of residence. Each leader is given from six to ten families. Some of these leaders are women although men predominate.

After the neighborhood leaders have been selected, they are called into a general meeting with the county agent. At these meetings, the purpose and function of the new organization is carefully explained by the county agent, after which each leader is given a chance for questions and discussion. At the same time, each leader is given a list of the families for which he will be responsible and needed adjustments in the distribution of the families made. If it is decided that a family has been placed in the wrong group, the change is made.

The larger and more congested towns of Utah County present a number of unique problems to effective neighborhood organization. Although there are seven towns in the county of 2,500 population and more, some of these towns are predominantly agricultural and will probably be organized by Extension. Where such towns will be organized by the county agent, the consensus of local leaders is that ward lines should be followed rather closely. Such a procedure seems to be sound, especially if the village is largely agricultural and the religion predominantly L.D.S. If this method is followed each ward can have a chairman as is now the case for the smaller villages. There seems to be enough intra-ward association to bring about a general acquaintanceship between the members.

The attitude of the people of Utah County toward the idea of the neighborhood leadership system seemed to be exceedingly favorable. Of the more than 30 leaders visited in the county, all were willing to participate as best they could. As one woman expressed it, "We have been waiting for something like this. So far the farmers have kinda' been left out of things and we have been following along like a bunch of sheep. We welcome this as a chance to do our part." Another woman leader, in one of the smaller villages, had observed that, "Our village has been too small for a Mayor and other formal officers so we have been left out of Civil Defense and other new organizations. Maybe this neighborhood leadership system will enable us to do something."

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

After extensive conversations with the County Agents of Emery and Utah Counties, with leaders in each county, and actual observation of field work currently in progress in the two counties, the following conclusions and recommendations are made with the hope that they may be of some benefit to further development and improvement of the neighborhood leadership system in Utah. They are as follows:

1. Some confusion now exists at the county level as to the best method to follow in selecting neighborhood leaders as well as to what the future program of the organization will be. To reduce the confusion to a minimum, I would suggest the delegation of some one person or a committee, at the State level, to assume an overall responsibility for supervising the organization. Such a step should produce greater inter-county uniformity. In case the neighborhood leadership organization later assumes the responsibility for the distribution of materials for other Federal war agencies, such a person or committee would be in a position to determine what materials and information should be carried.
2. Such Federal war agencies as the State War Board, the Office of Civilian Defense, the Consumer Division of OPA, and the Salvage Section of WPB will, from time to time, have important and timely information which will need to reach every farm family in the State. Such organization will have no effective machinery for channeling such information to individual families. When the information is of sufficient importance, I would suggest that it be sent to each county agent, who, in turn, can mail it out to his neighborhood leaders for distribution.
3. The more responsibility the local people are given in selecting their leaders, as well as the families that go with each leader, the more desirable their response to the organization seem to be. For this reason it seems highly desirable that as many of the leaders as possible be selected by the people themselves.
4. The practice of calling all neighborhood leaders in a community together for an early meeting and discussion of the neighborhood leadership system seems to be a good one. Such meetings have provided excellent opportunities for inter-leader discussions of the purpose and function of the new organization. Leaders seem to be much more concerned with their part in the organization after they have had a chance to discuss their duties among themselves.

It seems that such meetings could be held periodically with desirable results. The frequency at which such meetings should be held could be determined by such factors as available time and expressed need.

5. The method followed in Emery County of allowing neighborhood group lines to follow those of the Womens' Relief Society Districts seems to be a sound one. These districts are fairly well defined in the thinking of the people and include areas that are usually easily accessible to any family living within the district.

6. Many of the local leaders, as well as the county agents I talked with, are asking questions about the frequency at which specific information will be sent to the neighborhood leaders. As the organization becomes better known and more widely recognized, it seems likely that it will be asked to distribute more information, not only from Extension but from other agencies as well. From experience with the organization in other states, it seems that one task a week is about the optimum. There is obviously danger in overworking the organization while too little use of the leaders might produce an opposite effect. Experience with the organization will dictate its best use.
7. It seems that one of the first pieces of information sent out to the neighborhood leaders might be a simple directory of the Federal agencies operating at the county level. Such a directory could include the chairman of each organization, its address, and a brief statement of its function. Few farmers are acquainted with these agencies and frequently ask questions such as: "Where is the County Salvage Office? Who is on the ODI Committee?, etc." A county directory could contain such information and any additional listings the county agent thinks necessary.
8. The practice of using members of the Agricultural Planning Committee to aid in organizing the neighborhood leadership system seems to be highly desirable. Such members can be of service, not only in an advisory capacity, but in explaining and popularizing the new organization in the villages in which they live and have considerable influence.
9. Women leaders are proving to be effective in the communities where they have been appointed. To date, they have been considerably more active in their efforts on tasks assigned them than have the men. An extremely busy crop season has prevented the men from spending a great deal of time on their assignments so far. After the harvesting season is past, all state they will have more time to spend on the assignments.
10. It is very probable that too much emphasis is being placed on the time and effort that may be necessary for leaders to give to their new jobs. More emphasis should probably be placed on the informality of the organization and the point stressed that much of the future information can be spread through casual contacts and conversations with neighbors. A great deal will undoubtedly be accomplished by informing the leaders in each group. If they deem the information important, they will circulate it to their neighbors and friends.
11. In organizing the larger farm communities, it seems desirable to follow the Church organization lines as far as possible. Participation of the families in war activities seems to be sufficient to bring about a definite feeling of belonging to or identity with a given ward. In a village where two or more wards exist, it seems both possible and desirable to select a ward chairman and proceed with the organization of the ward in the same manner followed in organization of the smaller villages.

12. Information forwarded to neighborhood leaders should be brief and simply written. The practice of listing the main points on a particular subject has been the form most favorably accepted by neighborhood leaders in other States.
13. Now that the organization of the neighborhood leadership system is well under way in Utah, it will become necessary to do more thinking regarding the next phase of the work, namely, what the objectives and functions of the new machinery are to be. Is the organization to be one of many organizations operating in the communities or is it to become the overall organization for dealing with all war information and activities directly affecting the community. If it is to become the neighborhood and community organization, it could well serve to channel information and ideas from the people as well as downward to them.

If the latter course is decided upon it will be necessary to instruct the county agents accordingly at an early date. Once they have grasped this fundamental idea, they can begin to spread the idea along with their contacts with other agencies in the county that are now struggling to set up organizational machinery that may not only duplicate the efforts of Extension, but may well serve to weaken them as well.

